

1920s: Communism vs. Reforms: Mistakes of the Communist Party in Ireland

Introduction by Workers' Voice 1974

from <http://www.af-north.org>

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It is not very often that such an important pamphlet as this is produced for the information of the workers' movement, not only in Britain but for other countries as well. We are doing this not out of historical interest but to show that in Britain, as in other countries, there was a principled fight for a revolutionary programme and perspective against all the opportunism and reformism that has permeated the Socialist movement. This document "Communism v Reforms" represents one of the high-points in this struggle. It is a critique of the founding programme of the Communist Party of Ireland. This programme shows how reformist was the nature of the CP of Ireland from its inception and throws light on the willingness of the Communist International to trade revolutionary politics for numbers (the demand for large Communist Parties at almost any price).

The relevance of this pamphlet today is that these same ideas, that it attacks, are still held by the overwhelming majority of the so-called "revolutionary" Left - nationalisation, workers' "control", taking over and utilising the capitalist state through elections etc. These conceptions, in reality, leave the basis of capitalism intact - the wages system. The worker only changes exploiter from the private capitalist to the State.

Various organisations on the Left take up these ideas and follow them like an article of faith (Stalinists, Trotskyists, Maoists) because they accept the traditions of the formation of the Comintern and the Communist Parties in Western Europe. What they do not know or are unwilling to reveal is that these Communist Parties in western Europe were founded on reformist programmes - on the insistence of Lenin, in his "Left Wing Communism - an Infantile Disorder" and the Comintern.

The reformist nature of the CPI's programme is shown if we examine some of the questions facing the working class in the fight against capitalism and for Socialism.

The State

The State is, and has always been, the means of maintaining the rule of the dominating class or classes. Under the present society, capitalism, the forces of the State (army, police, etc.) and the bureaucracy (civil servants, and other administration, judges, courts, etc.) together with press, radio and other means of propaganda, and the Church, are all for the defence of the established order. Its role is to maintain the exploitation of the working class. It follows from this that if any other social force attempted to use this State, then it can only mean that it will continue with the exploitation of the working class (in one form or another). The only way to begin the emancipation of the working class is to destroy the established State.

This has been the experience of the working class internationally. The best example of this was the Paris Commune of 1871. The workers seized state power, abolished the capitalist State and developed its own organs of power to protect its conquests - the Commune. This destroyed, in Paris, the twin features of the State, the standing army and the bureaucracy (civil service). These were replaced by a militia in which all able-bodied citizens were

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However, the CPI's programme does not call for this. True, it calls for the arming of the workers in town and countryside to "defend their rights". To whom is this demand made - the State? To defend what "rights"? At first glance, the call for the universal arming of the workers may sound revolutionary, but it is not the same as Revolution. In the USA, it is the constitutional right of workers to carry arms. On many occasions, it is necessary to protect picket lines, workers' meetings, premises from attacks by scabs, bosses' hired thugs, police, state troops etc., with armed workers but all this is still within the bounds of capitalism and doesn't necessarily lead to the overthrow of capitalism and its State. And what is this same universal arming of the Irish workers for and to protect their rights from - capitalism and the State which this programme has not demanded the abolition of.

This same State is to own all heavy industry, transport and the banks "for the benefit of all the people". But the capitalists, landlords and other exploiters are part of the "people". So it certainly can't be called a Communist programme. This is nationalisation - "national"

capitalism as Engels called it. The fallacies of "workers' control" is explained in

the article.

The only basis for Socialism is for the means of production to be turned into "social" property and run by the workers for society as a whole. Along with this goes the abolition of wage labour, suppression of the market, capital accumulation (where it is not necessary for society) etc,

The CPI's programme also calls for representation from the trade unions, along with capitalist State, together with those of the workers. What are these Joint Councils to discuss, production levels? wages? No, only "workshop conditions". How very revolutionary!

Improving workshop conditions invariably lead to higher production and exploitation. The workers will be helping to make a rod for their own backs.

The trade unions are but the horse-traders in the labour market. Their role is to get the best price for the workforce it negotiates for, but within the bounds of profitability of capitalism.

The uniting of representatives of the State, trade unions and the workers is, in fact, the perfect model of the Corporate State.

The trade unions will disappear along with the abolition of wage-labour.

Revolutionaries often say there is a tendency for the trade unions to be incorporated into the State. Then, from this, they say this process must be reversed and be made to represent the interests of their members. It is wrong to pose it in this way because the trade unions are an integral part of the capitalist system. The trade union will not be the instrument of the Revolution. It will be the revolutionary organisation and revolutionary workers' councils.

Land Question

The fallacies of the slogan "all land to the peasants" is dealt with at length. The problems in Russia and East Europe about the land question is covered very well. There, it was dealing with the capitalist revolution in the countryside and the peasants were breaking up the remnants of Feudalism. In taking these actions as a model, the CPI's programme did not take into account the very big difference - Capitalism had developed in the countryside a long time before. The land was extensively cleared of tenant farmers during the last century and

converted into larger farms and ranches. Almost a million people were deprived of a livelihood - the cause of the depopulation of Ireland, which helped to create the Great Famine (together with the potato blight) and not the result of it.

The development of capitalism in the countryside has produced a section of the working class, the agricultural labourer. Their emancipation is the same as the industrial workers - the socialisation of the means of production (of which the land is part). The CPI's programme would have these workers declassed and converted into small farmers in inefficient small units.

These small farmers will then be easy prey for the propaganda of the capitalist parties. They will tell them that the workers will force up the price of industrial products these new farmers need. They will whisper in their ears that private capitalism could produce them cheaper and it would be in their interests. This could place these former workers at the throats of the industrial workers.

This section of the CPI's programme is openly reactionary and counter-revolutionary.

IRELAND 1922

This critique of the Irish Communist Party's programme by Pankhurst was not some fanciful dream, straight out of her head. It was written against the background of rising class struggle in Ireland in the period following the signing of the treaty that created the "Free State". The British exodus from Dublin Castle did not stop the class war in Ireland.

The manifestations of independence by Irish workers grew up with the unsettled conditions which attended the Republican struggle to throw off British rule.

Limerick Soviet

The Limerick General Strike of 1918 called the Limerick Soviet (workers' council) into being. This was the first incident to draw general attention to the new spirit developing amongst Irish workers. The Limerick General Strike was however a strike against the imposition of British military permits and though it was regarded with distrust in some Nationalist quarters, it was supported by numbers of Limerick employers and shopkeepers.

That the Limerick Soviet was used by workers to bring down prices and force up

wages was a fact overshadowed by the military permit question.

The state of war that increased in Ireland from 1916 until the truce in 1921, the occupation of the country by rival military forces which rendered impossible effective control by either force, facilitated seizures of plants by industrial workers and the land by peasants and agricultural labourers. The Nationalist Government Land Courts and Ministry of Labour endeavoured to check such seizures and to protect the property owners.

Already, the Irish struggle seemed to be shifting from the contest between British Imperialism and the Nationalists, to the contest between the Irish property owner and the proletariat.

Cork Soviet

The 'Workers' Dreadnought' contained many reports of the growing workers struggles and in particular the seizures of factories and land by workers in Cork (mills, creameries and later railways and docks). Workers at the mills and creameries at Quaterstown, near Mallow County Cork, faced with wage cuts did not remain at home and starve, reported the Dreadnought, but seized the plants and formed themselves into a workers' council and ran production. The workers ruled off the books of the firm and began entering their own transactions (for cash only). A large contingent of the Republican Army arrived fully armed, publicly displayed its force by drilling through the town, and placed guards by the mills. The Commandant in charge, Moylan, notified the workers' council that he would hold their leaders responsible for any looting or damage to the mills. They replied by placing their own guards on them.

The Commandant then awaited instructions from the Dail Minister as to future action. The new Irish Government, which clearly and inevitably was on the side of the property owner, scorned to hesitate as to how far it was willing to intervene in the struggle. The Cork employers were, of course, dissatisfied with the hesitation and wired to Michael Collins, Chairman of the Provisional Government, demanding that the Government should restore the mills to the employers. Michael Collins wired back that the Government had "arranged to end the unauthorised action of certain persons, in taking over mills referred to".

This was only to be expected: the Irish Provisional Government was a purely bourgeois Government, and Arthur Griffith, the President, was a hardened old

Tory in his political views where social questions were concerned.

What was not expected was that the executive of the Transport Workers Union in Dublin should have instigated the eviction of the Malow workers' council. Such, however, was the allegation made against the Executive by the Malow workers' council.

The council declared that the Transport Workers' Executive began by refusing lock-out pay.

Later, the local Free State Army Commandant, in evicting the workers from the mill, announced that their Union had asked the Army General Headquarters to "shift them".

On August 12, 1922, the Workers' Dreadnought reported in an article called "workers control in Ireland",

"The movement has now spread through-out Munster and across its borders, and all the works that have been taken have been held, except at Bruro, Bruree and Kilmallock. The attempt to take the Lansdowne in Limerick and the Kanturk works, failed. But everywhere else the workers attempts at seizure have been successfull. The workers are now controlling sixty creameries and a number of farms. They control the Tipperary gasworks, where fourteen men are employed, as well as fourteen creameries in the neighbourhood. In the glen of Aherlow is an estate of 400 acres of arable land and 1,400 acre of woods and mountains owned by Marcy Dawson, a British naval officer who went mad. This estate fell under the control of the agent, a man named Henderson. Did he appropriate it? Dawson called in the Black and Tans to blackleg on the farm workers. The place was finally closed down after a prolonged dispute Eighteen months later, the workers' council of action re-opened the place.

The workers repaired the disabled machinery and leaking boiler, set going the saw mill, which employs ten men, and is one of the best in that part of Ireland".

The 'Workers Dreadnought' went on to comment,

"Inexperience in certain directions, and the hostility met with in others, create some difficulties of course. The Soviets in Tipperary gasworks found

no difficulty in collecting the money from the workers using slot meters, but when they attempted to collect the accounts off the well-to-do they found that only 50 per cent of the people concerned were willing to pay. The gasworks were needing coal and being obliged to pay cash for it - the collection of accounts was proceeded with as quickly as possible. On the necessary amount being collected, it was found that the woman clerk had banked it, as she always did in the name of the firm without realising that it would be impossible for the Soviet to withdraw the money from the bank. In order to get the coal required, it was necessary to get some more money. It is interesting to observe that the dispute which led to the taking over of the gasworks arose from the refusal of the firm to pay a journeyman's wage to an apprentice who had served his time. The apprentice was appointed manager by the workers' soviet, and he went on working at his old wage, without even getting or demanding, the increase on account of which the dispute had arisen."

The Farmers' Union carried on a warfare against the workers. They made raids on creameries, burning them down or taking away essential parts of the machinery if the vigilance of the workers was overcome.

Some Lessons

The lessons of the struggle in Ireland are little different to that of Western Europe. The only major difference was that of being an oppressed "nation", the revolutionary movement succumbed to "nationalism" more than the cancer of reformism, as in the advanced capitalist countries. The Irish revolutionary movement was beheaded in the abortive "Easter Rebellion"

in 1916. The refusal of the Nationalists to assist them was a class line-up against the common foe, the working class.

Along with nationalism went syndicalism (trade unionism being enough). Despite this, the insurrectionists failed to couple the uprising with a general strike, to spread it to a social revolution. Without this action, the seizure of a number of buildings in Dublin could only have been an attempted putsch.

This left the revolutionary movement very weak for many years. When the CPI was formed, it was composed mainly by "immigrants" in Britain. The Comintern provided large amounts of money. They "bought" a Communist Party, rather

than develop it out of the workers'

movement. The CPI's politics was taken from Moscow and the CPGB (which had already been purged of the Left Communists around Sylvia Pankhurst, consequently had become servile). It is not surprising that the CPGB had been reformist from its inception as the main body of its membership came from the BSP (British Socialist Party), which had remained affiliated to the Labour Party throughout the first world war.

There can be no other explanation for the reformist nature of this programme. We have not found any criticism from either the Comintern or the CPGB against this programme. Maybe the defenders of the Stalinist and Trotskyist blocs would like to explain this.

The crisis during and after the First World War provided an opportunity for workers in many countries to attack capitalism. Only in the defeated countries, Russia and Germany was there a serious attempt to seize power. In the other countries it never even got to this level. The movements were contained within the system and the capitalist parties (including the Social Democrats) and trade unions were able to ensure that no such attack took place.

Where large movements to seize factories and estates took place (as in Turin in Italy) the State and employers did not immediately contest this. Their attitude was "by all means occupy them, run them if you wish" but built up their forces to crush them at a later stage.

The experience of the occupations in Ireland (as elsewhere) was they didn't challenge the whole system, wages, market, etc. They respectfully kept the companies accounts going and collected money. Where the money was mistakenly paid into the companies account, they didn't challenge the bank or even thought of seizing the coal to keep the gasworks going.

Even the journeyman who had come out of his time was not paid the full rate for the job (which had started the dispute) showed a marked reverence for the old wage rates.

All this shows that the existence of workers councils is not enough. The movement must be taken forward to conquer power and in this a revolutionary organisation is vital. Ideas are not enough, they must be applied in action.

The CPI's programme would seem very revolutionary when compared to today's position with a peaceful road to socialism a la CPGB. On the question of the six counties of Ulster under direct rule, they work in the Civil Rights Movement to get a "Civil Rights Bill" passed

by the English Parliament, the same body that has been responsible for centuries of exploitation and oppression in Ireland.

Both the CP in Ireland and Britain work in the Connolly Association. This organisation has a three point programme for immediate implementation.

(1) The British government must recognise the 'Irish dimension', the fact that those who want independence and unity are the MAJORITY of the Irish people. We want a constitutional road to a united Ireland and a promise that Mr Heath will not block it.

(2) The establishment of political freedom in Northern Ireland by passing the FULL BILL OF

RIGHTS.

(3) The cessation of the misuse of British troops on harassing security duties, and their return to England as soon as possible.

How very "progressive"! If we promise the government very nicely that we will be good boys, then they may grant these demands.

Along with these 'demands' goes the worst Parliamentary cretinism known to date:

LOBBYING PARLIAMENT

WHAT IS IT

Outside the chamber where debates go on, there is a large open space called the lobby.

Anybody who wishes to do so is entitled to go in there and ask for his Member of Parliament, He does this by writing his name and business on a card, which an official takes in to the chamber. You can ask for other MP's

as well, but they are not so likely to come out as your own.

IS IT DIFFICULT

No. MPs meet thousands of people and are usually very courteous even when they disagree.

But you must know what you want to tell them. They are busy and do not have time to learn about everything.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE

It is hard to know. If your member is waiting to speak he obviously can't come out. And if he doesn't know you are coming he may have slipped out on some other job. But other times he'll be out within minutes. You can then ask for another one.

DOES IT DO ANY GOOD

Members of Parliament have to take notice of their constituents. The more who go on the lobby the more notice will be taken. So bring your friends if you can.

(Extracts from a leaflet issued for the lobby of Parliament on 21 Feb., 1973).

This is the logic of 50 years of reformism and Parliamentarism. The need today is to return to the kind of Communist Programme advocated in the article and wage a merciless fight against all manifestations of bankrupt Social Democracy.

Communism vs. reforms, mistakes of the

Communist Party of Ireland - Workers

Dreadnought 1922

from "Workers' Dreadnought", 1922

COMMUNISM VERSUS REFORMS -- MISTAKES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF

IRELAND

The Communist Party Of Ireland , Third International, through its organ, "The Workers'

Republic", puts forward a programme for an Irish Republic This programme is not a Communist one: we urge the Irish Communists to withdraw it and put forward a genuine Communist programme in its place.

NON-COMMUNIST PROGRAMME OF THE IRISH C.P. REQUIRING REVISION

- (1) Ownership and control of all the heavy industries by the state for the benefit of all the people
- (2) Complete ownership of the transport system by the state -railways, canals, shipping, etc.
- (3) State ownership of all the banks.
- (4) Confiscation of the large ranches and estates without compensation to the landed aristocracy, and the distribution of the land amongst the landless farmers and agricultural labourers. Election of joint councils representative of these two classes to distribute and manage the land. Abolition of all forms of tenure and indebtedness either to private owners or the State. Cancellation of all debts and mortgages.
- (5) Establishment of all-round eight-hour working day.
- (6) Control of workshop conditions to be vested in a joint council representing the workers, trade unions concerned, and the State
- (7) Municipalisation of all public services, trams, light, heat, water, etc, and free use by the workers.
- (8) Compulsory rationing of all available housing accommodation and the abolition of all rents.
- (9) Full maintenance for the unemployed at full trade union rates.

(10) Universal arming of all workers in town and country to defend their rights.

The above programme should be changed for the following: Communist Programme

(1) The abolition of Dail Eireann and the present local governing bodies.

(2) The summoning of the Soviets (Workers Councils) composed of the workers in industry, on the land, in transport and distribution and domestic work, to arrange for the practical work of carrying on and ministering to the needs of the people, by co-operative effort. The working hours will be decided by those who are doing the work in conformity with necessity and inclination.

(3) The abolition of all private property in land, and in the means of production, distribution, transport, and communication.

(4) Closing of banks and abolition of money.

(5) Free use by all of the common products and possessions according to need and desire. In case of scarcity, equal rationing of what may be scarce, the common effort being directed to overcoming the scarcity so that rationing may cease.

(6) The abolition of unemployment, parasitism, and overwork, by all members of the community joining in doing a share of the necessary work of the community.

(7) The throwing open of all educational facilities to all, and their very great extension and development.

(8) The building up of Communist ideology and ways of life, and the abolition of all forms of buying, selling, and barter of goods and services - a great task, in which the Russian effort has largely failed.

(9) The preparation of Ireland to maintain itself without intercourse with capitalist Governments and capitalist trade, and to hold out as a self-contained, self-sufficient community until the people of other countries become Communist. Such isolation is inevitable to a country which becomes Communist, since capitalism will not assist in the maintenance of a Communist community.

Encouragement of Communists in other countries to bring to Ireland such raw materials and manufactured articles as she may lack, and to give also their personal service if required.

Preparation and equipment of the Communist Commonwealth to withstand attack from without or within.

Where the CPI Programme is unsound

In demonstrating the unsoundness of CPI's programme for an Irish Republic (a Workers Republic even the CPI surely cannot call it), it should first be pointed out that the programme does not include the abolition of capitalism and private property in land, although all Communists are agreed that the workers cannot be emancipated within the capitalist system.

The programme is, therefore, purely a reformist one, not differing widely from that of the British Labour Party

Is it a Moscow Programme? It should be observed that the CPI is working in close conjunction with the CPGB, premises at Covent Garden. The question therefore arises as to whether this unsound reformist programme is a hastily-drafted, ill-considered production of the Irish Party or whether it is a Moscow product, framed with the deliberate purpose of falling into line with the Reformist parties at any price. Any steadfast and well-informed Communists still remaining within the Third International should give their serious attention to this problem..

A Fabian Scheme? The proposals for the ownership and management of industry are on truly Fabian lines. They appear in clauses 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9. It should be observed that under this scheme the State would remain, as at present, and would own the heavy industries and

railways, canals, shipping and other means of transport. The municipality would own the trains, light, heat, water etc. As it is specifically stated that there would be free use of these services we take it that these services, but not other services are to be supplied without payment.

Is it intended the payment for the "freely used" municipal services should go through the rates, in truly Fabian style? Most probably that is so, for money would remain - note the provision for State ownership of all banks in clause 3,

and trade union rates of wages, clause 9.

Housing, apparently, would pass into State or municipal hands, because clause 8 says: Compulsory Rationing of all available housing accommodation and the abolition of all rents.

Immediate building of free housing accommodation to meet the needs and in accordance with the desires of the people ought certainly to be added to any catalogue of slogans; for the rationing of existing property could never produce satisfactory results.

Private Enterprise Remains. Certainly the supply of food, the first essential need of mankind, and apparently the supply also of clothing and many other necessities, would remain a source of private money making under this vague programme of half-measures. Thus in this CPI Republic we should have as at present, private enterprise catering for certain needs, the state catering for others, and the municipality catering for others. Some of these services would be supplied without direct payment, like upkeep of the roads, the lighting of the streets, and the assistance of the Fire Brigade today and like the water, for which people whose rates are included in their rents, do not realise that a separate rate is paid, a rate which, by the way, is rising considerably.

Under the CPI plan the State and the municipality might provide more services than at present, but private capitalism would remain, and with it the social classes and social inequalities of today.

FALLACY OF WORKERS' CONTROL UNDER CAPITALIST OR STATE OWNERSHIP

Clause 6 stipulates that there should be control of workshop conditions vested in joint councils of the workers, the trade unions concerned, and the State.

This is a hotch-potch borrowed from the Russian 'compromise' and a host of tinkering reformist programmes. It recognises the conflict of interest of the workers versus the state, and versus also the trade unions. How can the existence of the trade unions be justified if they do not adequately represent the workers? What need of other representation would the workers have if they formed the trade unions, and if the unions adequately represented them?

What is meant here by the term worker? We presume the actual workers in the

shops gathered together in shop councils on Soviet lines are here indicated. Such Soviets or councils, linked industrially and nationally, should replace both the trade unions and the State, in our opinion.

The system of workshop control, by workers, State, and Trade Union representatives, in state owned industries would give the actual workers no more freedom, no more real control than do the Whitley Joint Industrial Councils of employers and employed.

In the last analysis, whatever promises may be given in regard to workers' control of industry are worthless, so long as the actual ownership and control of the purse are in the hands of the private employer or the State, in this case it is only control of the workshop conditions that is suggested. To control workshop conditions while an employer controls wages and finance is a practical impossibility. The Italian workers who accepted such a worthless compromise as

the price of evacuating the metal factories found to their cost that workshop control under an employer is not worth accepting.

The war time production committees and Whitley Councils should surely have taught this lesson.

THE WAGE SYSTEM MAINTAINED

The existence of money and the wage system, which is to be retained (see Clause 9), inevitably mean unequal wages, a grading according to existing bourgeois standards, and the lower remuneration of the manual worker and the so-called unskilled.

The co-existence of capitalist industry and its ramifications dictates within narrow limits the remuneration and status of the wage-worker who is employed in State and municipal enterprises. Everyone knows that the man whose wages are paid by a private employer protests with the taxpayer and ratepayer against any considerable raising of the wages of those who are employed in State and municipal services. The standard aimed at by the drafters of the CPI programme may be judged from the demand for an eight-hour day in clause 5, and that in clause 9, "for full maintenance for the unemployed at full trade union rates". Things would be little changed if these proposals were put into effect.

THE PEASANTS AND THE LAND.

The position of the land workers is dealt with in clause 4:

"(4) Confiscation of the large ranches and estates without compensation to the landed aristocracy, and the distribution of the land amongst the landless farmers and agricultural labourers. Election of joint council representative of these two classes to distribute and manage the land. Abolition of all forms of tenure and indebtedness either to private owners or the State. Cancellation of all debts and mortgages."

This clause shows a slavish imitation of the Russian method, but the result of the practice in Ireland must of necessity be less satisfying than it has been in Russia. The cutting up of all the land of Ireland would still leave Irish land hunger unappeased. Rosa Luxemburg was, perhaps, the first of their actual supporters to make a definite attack upon the land policy of the Bolsheviki at the time of their seizure of power in October 1917. It was during the summer of 1918 that Rosa Luxemburg wrote the critique of the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik policy therein, which was recently serialised in the Workers' Dreadnought and will be shortly published by us in book form. Rosa Luxemburg there expressed the view that the policy of cutting up the land of Russia into small peasant holdings, the produce of which each man would privately own and privately sell, would be disastrous to the Revolution and would create for Communism, instead of a few large opponents, millions of small ones.

The facts have justified Rosa Luxemburg's opposition to the project in a thousand directions.

Ossinski, Russian Commissar of Agriculture, reported as follows to the ninth All-Russian Congress of Soviets in 1921 : "Our peasants," he said, "are making everywhere the most colossal efforts to clarify their relations to the land and to their neighbours, to do away with the confusion which we must be frank about it - the Revolution has not decreased but increased, because our redistributions in 1918-19 did not establish any regular land arrangements. To do so was beyond our means, and as a result we still have a dreadful scattering of strips, a narrowing of strips, continuous divisions and redivisions and complete instability of land relationships."

Professor Max Sering, of Berlin University, observes that the 1917 Revolution actually served to hasten the transition which was taking place in Russia from the common ownership

of peasant land to private ownership of the land, The Czarist Stolypin legislation of 1906 and 1910 had already undermined common ownership through the village commune: the first land law of the Revolution, though it declared for socialisation of the land, in fact established small peasant ownership. It is true that the Revolution hastened the break-up of the large estates and extended the land in peasant hands. In thirty-six provinces for which statistics are available the peasants possessed 80% of the usable land; they now possess 96.8 per cent.

In 29 provinces for which figures are available the land per head in the hands of the peasants has increased from 1.87 dessiatin to 2.26 dessiatins since the Revolution.

It should be observed that it is not only in Russia, that since the War and the Russian Revolution, land has been passing from great estate owners to small peasant proprietors. An agrarian revolution of unprecedented extent has passed over the whole of Eastern and intermediate Europe, with the exception of Old Serbia and German Austria. At the outbreak of war 10 to 20% of the sown area of Russia was worked in large properties, but in Old Rumania 47% of the land was worked by large estates before the war, and now only 8% is so worked.

Wherever the small holding has replaced the large estate production has decreased, and especially in grain and in crops which are used for manufacturing purposes, such as sugar-beet, cotton, hemp, flax, and oil-bearing plants

The table-land of the former Russian Empire, and the lands through which the Danube passes were until the War the granaries of Europe. The export of bread-stuffs, flour, barley, oats and maize from Serbia and Austria- Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria amounted in 1912, after deducting small imports to 104.7 million metric centners, 71.7 million centners going to the industrial centres of Great Britain, Holland, Germany and Belgium. The exports from Eastern Europe in 1921 were only one twentieth of the pre-war- namely 5.4 million centners. This exportable surplus was drawn from the Danube countries : it consists entirely of maize, oats, and barley. As regards bread-stuffs (wheat, wheaten flour and rye), Eastern Europe now has to buy more than it sells Estonia and Latvia, once exporting have become importing countries. Poland also imports, though it has incorporated the two former German surplus producing territories of East Prussia and Posen The balance of grain trade is also against Austria and Hungary, Jugoslavia and Rumania are the only countries with exports worth mentioning, and the export from all these has been much reduced. The Greater Rumanian

wheat export of 1921 was 0.76 million centners only half that of Old Rumania (1.37 million centner) though Old Rumania was only two thirds the size of Greater Rumania, War and drought have been largely responsible for reduced harvests, but they only partially explain the shrinkage which is great even in areas which have not been visited by war and drought, but have passed into small peasants holding.

Wherever the small peasant holding arises, the tendency is for the peasants to produce a variety of small products for his own use, which will make him as far as possible self-supporting; without regard to the outer world. Such a tendency must necessarily be accentuated in these days of fluctuating currencies. Mr Ernest Spitz, director of the Czecho-Slovak Sugar Export Co., of Prague, says:

"The agrarian reform on which we have embarked, and which in the end will result in the breaking up of the big, landed estates, gives rise to fears that even the present reduced area under sugar-beet will not be maintained in future. The breaking up of the big landed estates is more likely to result in a diminution than in the expected increase of agricultural production, The peasant is inclined to cultivate crops other than beet-root, as this requires an excessive amount of labour. The big land-owners used to grow it because they themselves partially owned the sugar factories."

The great land-owner does not perform the excessive amount of labour, he pays labourers to do the work. The smallholder has only himself and his children to turn to: it is natural that he should refuse, "an excessive amount of labour", when any easier methods of maintaining himself are possible.

The peasants on his tiny holding cannot afford the labour saving devices which are owned by large-scale producers: he cannot afford the drainage and other improvement that are required.

A Polish authority states:

" Throughout Poland the small farms produce 10 to 15 per cent less than the large estates.....

In the eastern borderlands the difference is still greater...

The difficulty of importing the necessary stock and implements for the creation of many thousand new farms is very great at present, and has undoubtedly

checked the demand of the peasants for the immediate redistribution of the whole land fund in accordance with the original scheme."

Though the Russian peasants are said have secured 80 per cent of farm equipment when the great estates were broken up, that equipment of course, lost much of its adequacy when it came to be distributed amongst a large number of small holders, even though they might lend it out to each other. In 1921 the minimum need of the Russian villages was for three million new ploughs and the repair of as many more, for over a million sowed arid, hundred of thousands of harrows, rakes and other implements, not 20 per cent of that need has been met.

But let us turn to France, where small proprietorship is of long standing. On November 3rd, 1913, there were in the whole of France excluding Alsace-Lorraine, 7,520,922 owners of 13,444,226 landed properties; 33.09% of the cultivators were working owners. 45.77% wage-earners, and 21.74% non-earning farmers. Compere Morel, formerly High Commissioner for Agriculture, wrote in the Manchester Guardian Reconstruction survey:

"Our agricultural production has remained stationary for thirty years, while in the same period it has about doubled in Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Hungary, Switzerland, and Germany...

"Our grain crops average 12.5 quintals to the hectare; Germany's, 21.6, Denmark's 22.9; and Belgium's 25.2. The disproportion is even greater in the case of potatoes: France, 80.6

quintals to the hectare; Hungary, 272; Denmark, 296; Holland, 307; Germany 307.4; Belgium 514.1."

If the desire of humanity is to farm in separate little patches, instead of on large co-operative farms, well and good; society must meet that need. Let it not be thought, however, that to cut the land up into small holdings, privately owned, privately worked, with their produce privately sold in competition, is an easier and more practical solution than that of common ownership of the land and the working of it in groups, with the aid of all the resources of the community for any development requiring a special effort.

So long as the produce of the land is to be bought and sold, there can be no Communism, not even State Socialism. So long as money is in circulation and profits can be made by trading, the evils of capitalism will remain, and must go

on growing. Have we not seen the return to Russia of the old barbarous customs - inheritance, patent law, rent interest, and profit, and all the other capitalist methods of mis-managing production and distribution, and of surrounding it by useless toil ?

PARLIAMENT OR THE SOVIETS?



Observe further that the State referred to in the CPI programme, which would own the heavy industries and give a share of workshop control to the workers, would remain the capitalist State. It would remain the capitalist State, because capitalism would remain, and because it would be organised just as the capitalist State is organised today - through Parliament, under the special Irish name, Dail Eireann.

Observe that the CPI programme makes no mention of Soviets, which were considered one of the crucial points in the Third International programme when the Third International emerged.

SYLVIA PANKHURST.

Anton Pannekoek's Letter to Sylvia

Pankhurst

Pannekoek discusses the failings of the programme of the newly formed Irish Communist Party.

Anton Pannekoek's letter -

DEAR COMRADE,

I have read with much satisfaction your article on the programme of the Irish Communist Party, and I think you are perfectly right in calling it a non-communist programme. Indeed, the essence of Communist thought is that the great transformation of society from Capitalism to Communism can only be accomplished by the common efforts of the workers themselves, all of them acting where they stand in the process of production.

The belief that some foreign power, the State, may accomplish it for the workers by decrees and laws is a social-democratic belief. Nay, only the most narrow-minded social democrats believe it; most social democrats in former times knew quite well that the chief force of transformation must come from below.

The state is not a supernatural being; it is the organised host of politicians, leaders and officials backed by armed force. The belief that the State may establish Communism by legislative means is the belief that this small host of officials and lenders, by their wisdom, may save the mass of the workers from slavery - these workers having nothing to do but vote for them. Now the experience of Germany has proved that placing Labour leaders at the head of the State is simply a change of rulers, which cannot bring any real revolution.

On the other hand, Russia in the first years of the Revolution showed that after the workers had already seized the power in the workshops, in the Army, and on the land, by their committees, the revolution could be accomplished by seizing the State power i.e., all this activity was centralised, united, and organised by central organs, and made a strong united body against attacks from the Capitalist side.

The programme of the Communist Party of Ireland is not only non-Communist because it appeals to the State for everything, but also because it asks from this State only reforms. It would have been, though not Communist in its means and ways, nevertheless Communist in its aims, if it had constituted measures for abolishing Capitalist exploitation and introducing Communist ownership. But even this it doesn't do. It supposes a State Power ruled by the workers - for awaiting these measures from a State ruled by Capitalists would be pure nonsense - while private enterprise still dominates the economic field; but it does not make use of this State Power to attack and destroy private enterprise, but only to reform it to somewhat less Intolerable conditions for the workers. The

model of this programme probably must be sought for in the Russian conditions, where the Communist Party tries to keep its political domination at the same time that it must allow Capitalistic enterprises to continue.

But also in our own West European conditions we may find the roots for it. It tries to combine the interests of the working class for reforms with the interests of the petty bourgeoisie; by the State ownership of banks, railways, and big industries, it promises to free petty enterprises from the crushing domination of big finance and heavy industry. That is the reason why it does not proclaim the abolition of private property: it desires to eat from two cakes; at the same time, it does not attempt to win solely the workers by the great ideal of Communism and revolution, to which at this moment the great mass is indifferent, which thus exact great pains and long efforts. It also attempts to win the petty bourgeois class and also the middle-class minded mass of the workers. It attempts to win both these classes within a short time, not raising their mind to the higher standing of the great Communist prospects, by vanquishing their bourgeois narrow-mindedness, but baiting them with the programme of a referred petty capitalistic world, wholly in line with their inherited thoughts.

It is nothing else than the "New Zealand Socialism" of twenty years ago, invented by bourgeois reformers wanting the aid of the small working class against foreign finance, and resulting in strangling the class struggle and the freedom of movement of the workers.

In Ireland it has its roots in the economic backwardness of the country, with its small proletariat, its great mass of petty bourgeoisie, its great mass of small land holders and labourers who hope to become petty owners. It tries to give them a common programme, which, of course, cannot be Communist.

Perhaps it may be said that, as Communism is not yet possible in such a country, this programme of a reformed society of petty enterprise controlled by the working class is to be preferred to everything else, and the best possible way out. But the idea of a stable society on this basis of peaceful co-operation of classes is an illusion. You have already shown it in your article with regard to workers control.

The same impossibility may be seen regarding unemployment. "Full maintenance for the unemployed at full trade union rates" is asked for. Where would the State get the funds necessary under this programme? The funds must

in some way come from production; either from the profit on State industries, or from taxes raised by small enterprise. Of course these capitalists would not be content to pay to the unemployed such rates; they would try to lower them, in order to restore the pressure of unemployment on the wages. Here arises the natural and fundamental enmity of the classes, the chief opposition of their interests, the impossibility of peacefully combining their efforts. As long as private enterprise exists, it

must try to hold itself against competition by lowering the cost of production, or else be ruined. It cannot be content to secure a fixed living to the workers.

In 1848, in Paris, this payment of unemployed was the chief cause of the shopkeepers and other petty bourgeois becoming furious against the "do nothings" and crushing the proletarian revolt in the June massacre. But also from the Communist point of view this leaving the workers unemployed and paying them a life rate is not right. Communism means production of an abundance of goods, leaving people idle who are desirous to work is spoiling the resources of the community. A Communist society will not leave them unemployed, but will let them produce goods for the community, thus for themselves and other to increase the general wealth.

Thus the so-called Communist programme is not the programme of Communists desirous to show to the workers the difficult but only real way to freedom; it is the programme of politicians desirous to win the great mass of adherents from various poor classes, by a programme of reforms that means coalition of workers, small farmers and petty bourgeois.

What you say about the results of the coalition in the States of Eastern and Middle Europe shows that this coalition uses the force of the proletariat to promote the formation of a numerous class of small land owners, extremely hostile to any Communism, thus it throws obstacles in the way to Communism. It does still more so by filling the minds of the workers with illusions, and by diverting their eyes from the only way to freedom; the way of class struggle, clear class-consciousness and confidence in their own power.

Yours very truly,

Anton Pannekoek